

Minutes – July 18, 2022 -- Portsmouth Arts and Nonprofits Committee

Russ called the meeting to order at 12:02 PM.

Members in attendance: Russ Grazier, Robin Albert, Larry Yerdon, Tina Sawtelle, Jason Goodrich, Councilor Kate Cook, Genevieve Aichele. Remotely: Renee Giffroy, Barbara Massar, Courtney Perkins, Ben Van Camp. Not present: Nihco Gallo, Beth Falconer, Martha Fuller Clark

Non-members in attendance: Sean Clancy, Stephanie Seacord (recording secretary)

Minutes approved for May 2022.

GoOut Marketing Campaign Update (Ben Van Camp & Jason Goodrich): Pilot campaign has now ended. Expecting a cumulative YTD report from Darci Creative after the end of July and the completion of the social media buy. (PR, which is longer term continues as the Chamber's agency, Sullivan PR, continues to wrap the cultural messaging in her media relations efforts. The Marketing subcommittee will wait for that report to make their strategic recommendations but notes that the analytic for the gap between the conclusion of the pilot and the next campaign, whenever funding is approved, may be useful for comparison – to see if there is drop-off in engagement comparing Jun-Jul to Aug-Sep in the current analytics.

In evaluating the numbers to make its strategic recommendations, the Marketing subcommittee will look for:

- Reasons for engagement patterns eg spike mid-June
- Traffic from GoPortsmouth to the individual venue sites and the engagement. As an example, The Music Hall is looking at referrals but also how many pages are visited, length of time on the site and low “bounce” off the site.
- What is the impact from each channel (Google ads, social, streaming tv)
- Is the campaign reaching the desired target audience
- Is the call-to-action messaging resonating? Has A/B testing been used?
- Is the quantitative impact of the campaign additive to the impact of the venues' own marketing?
- Is this the right agency for this campaign
- How will the campaign be modified for seasonal changes (esp. holiday)

Barbara also noted that the NH State Council on the Arts and their subcommittee of arts nonprofits is communicating with NH Travel & Tourism to make sure cultural assets and venues are included in the tourism campaign. Much of the focus during the pandemic has been on outdoors activities (even outdoor arts venues) and not on other cultural attractions.

Russ asked BRC members whether indoor attendance is returning:

Strawbery Banke reported a 2000 visitor increase in attendance – but that there was a 25 percent cancellation rate on a recent indoor events. Tuesdays on the Terrace attendance is up and Vintage & Vine VIP tickets sold out in 2 weeks (both of these events are outdoors.)

The Music Hall noted that while the Historic Theatre is closed for renovations until Sep 1, the Lounge has done well – but is new. Ticket buyers are waiting longer to make their decisions – more last minute purchases.

Seacoast Rep attendance is up but is always content-driven. Achieving beyond budget: 230 seats, budgeted 90, experiencing 150-160 actual sold.

NH Theater Project does not offer summer productions. They were at 50 percent through May, while the COVID-19 variants were in wide circulation. Also had to cancel about half of the productions due to COVID-19 in the cast. Did ok, but it's slow coming back.

Prescott Park Arts Festival audiences seem to be up 25-30% over last year but are not back at pre-pandemic levels. Food and merchandise sales are good – audiences are responding “more generously.”

NH Art Association Art Round Town – (unticketed) exhibit opening attendance is good but not great. For the juried shows, artists are waiting until the last minute to register.

ProPortsmouth – Summer in the Streets wildly popular. Market Square Day indicator was that both vendors and road race participants waited until the last minute to register. The outdoor dining spaces limited the space for vendors. Anxious about whether to offer First Night indoor programming. Advance ticket sales – only offered when there's indoor programming – support the \$20k cost of the ice sculptures and fireworks. Also wondering if volunteers will be available and willing – not knowing what variants may be circulating then.

NH State Council on the Arts reports ticket sales are slower and later. People wait, even if the ticket price goes up closer to the performance.

AFTA Update: Robin reported that survey numbers are well behind where expected. As of July 7, AFTA reported receiving just 18 surveys from the QR code link. Only 16 paper surveys have come in. Very concerned as the subcommittee expected most of the surveys would be completed during the active summer season. BRC organizations need to step up the participation.

- Suggestions for increasing participation:
- Curtain speech reminding people to complete the 2-minute, 8-question survey.
- Paper and QR code equally appealing to participants
- Maybe include QR code on a program insert or signage around the venue
- PPAF is having interns canvas the park during events.
- Let audiences know how important it is for all of the arts organizations to have this date: it drove grants during the pandemic, it underscores the critical value of the cultural economy to our communities. The City has invested in this process and we need to return good data to get the quantifiable measures we need.

Members of the BRC/AFTA subcommittee will help if needed. And develop a participation strategy if the response doesn't improve. Expected the first results from AFTA at the end of July – maybe the early report was an effort to boost response.

AFTA committee has divided the list of arts organizations to secure participation. Committee recognizes it's a struggle to get traction without an ArtSpeak to push the process.

Robin noted that AFTA has streamlined the financial reporting that will be due in January.

BRC committed to “take the AFTA survey to heart and move it forward.”

Go to this website AFTA page for the paper forms, cover sheets, QR code and other information:

<https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/city/americans-arts-6th-arts-economic-prosperity-study>

Cultural Plan: Subcommittee of Councilor Cook, Sean, Barbara and Russ have discussed the structuring of the effort and what is in line with City expectations. Councilor Cook has discussed with the City Manager that either the subcommittee will recruit a workgroup from the committee to gain City Council support along with BRC leadership or, as last time, create a separate BRC on the plan. It's tough to recruit volunteers until September. Right now the BRC is focused on AFTA and the ARPA funding request.

City Council has received a letter of support for the ARPA request from the EDC. And the Council has requested an ARPA Work Session, probably sometime in Aug. Councilor Cook is discussing the timetable with the City Manager.

BRC needs clarity on next steps:

- Is the written request sufficient or is something additional needed?
- 50% of the funds are already allocated (See City website: <https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/city/arpa-uses>)

- How does the public support different asks, eg. COVID Response Task Force committee for social services. The Work Session is not the time to make a request.
- How should the City Council plan in the FY24 budget to address one-time allocations
- How will the gap in the GoOut marketing campaign impact the arts' recovery. Russ: The marketing campaign to make the needed impact will take investment. The recovery will likely take 5 years. To stall at 18 months in is dangerous. Things are beginning to return to something like normal, but the prior years' damage has been done. Need to invest to keep moving forward.

Sean noted that funding for the AFTA study and the Cultural Plan is in place and does not come from ARPA funds.

Meeting adjourned at 12:58 pm

Next meeting: Aug 15 at 12 noon. City Hall Conference Room A.